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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by International Federation for Home Economics, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement*

Legislation for gender equality and the empowerment of women in care work

The International Federation for Home Economics, as an international non-governmental organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and a member organisation of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, firmly believes that an essential prerequisite for the functioning of social systems all over the world is care work and social provisioning, carried out primarily by women and girls at no payment or under extremely low payment conditions. Women's unpaid care work is also recognized as one of the most persistent barriers to gender equality. Independent of the political and economic systems under which this work is performed, a general consensus seems to prevail that women's unpaid work may be expanded easily and without limitations. On the other hand, it is evident that care work is a major contributor for economic dynamics and growth in all economic systems. According to the Human Development Index US$ 16 trillion of the global output is "invisible", US$ 11 trillion of which is attributable to the contribution of women.

In the light of this dichotomy the International Federation for Home Economics requests that legal frameworks are put in place at international and national levels under which care work at all levels and under all conditions is performed. It is also essential that mechanisms are put in place to monitor the implementation of such norms. It should be recalled at this stage, that commitments to the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS, have been made by Governments at the international level, including at the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), as well as in the outcomes of sessions of the Commission on the Status o Women since 1996. International Human Rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), also recognize the obligations that State Parties have to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men.

The International Federation for Home Economics, as a non-governmental organisation and member of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, therefore, wishes to draw the attention of United Nations Member States to the need for:

- A valuation of unpaid work and of "satellite accounts", including the improvement of methodologies concerning time-use studies;

- Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and in particular of art. 5a) on the elimination of prejudices as well as customary and all other practices, which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women compared to men and on stereotyped gender roles;

* Issued without formal editing.

- Explicit policy action to be taken to eliminate sexist stereotypes in care work and to encourage men to take up their caring and domestic responsibilities. Such actions should include:

    - the establishment of a policy framework on care-giving, the goal being to value care, to undertake measures to ensure equality of responsibilities, to bring about increases in the supply of services and to improve the conditions under which care work is carried out

    - public awareness campaigns in order to promote the value of "shared care"

    - the establishment of a legal framework conducive to decent working and gainful employment conditions in care and social provisioning professions, including social security rights

    - the establishment of a legal framework enabling the public and private sector to opt for care-friendly policies.